

Division of Humanities

Course Code: HUMA 4000L / HUMA 6003E [co-listed]
Course Title: Philosophy of History and Society
Course Offered: Fall 2019
Time: Wednesdays, 3:00 pm - 5:45 pm
Course Instructor: Professor Eric S. Nelson
Office Hours: Mondays, 1 to 4 pm and by appointment
Office: Room 2370

Course Description:

This course will introduce students to key questions in the philosophy of history and society in the context of the development of modern German philosophy from German Idealism and Marxism to Hermeneutics and Critical Social Theory. In addition to addressing how historical understanding and interpretation occurs, we will examine conceptions of history in relation to the Enlightenment, modernity, and rationalization, as well as the analysis of their limits and pathologies in alienation, reification, and misrecognition.

Course Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs):

	Course ILOs
1	Recognize key moments in the history of modern Western philosophy in the German context and in light of their global implications.
2	Improve abilities to interpret philosophical and social-theoretical texts and sources.
3	Cultivate aptitude in analyzing the logical structures of arguments and systematic conceptions of history and society.
4	Develop capacities to express own ideas orally in classroom discussions.
5	Develop skills in academic and philosophical writing.

Course Outline:

I. German Idealism and its Materialist Transformation

Week 1, Sept. 4

Topic: (1) Introduction to the course; (2) Enlightenment, Cosmopolitanism, and History

Reading: Kant, *What is Enlightenment?* (1784) and *Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Intent* (1784)

Week 2, Sept. 11

Topic: Hegel's Models of History in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*

Reading: Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, selections on the Master/Slave Dialectic, Enlightenment and Superstition, and Freedom and Terror [Note: challenging read]

Week 3, Sept 18

Topic: Alienation, Reification, and Ideology Critique

Reading: Karl Marx, *Theses on Feuerbach* (1845), *Economic-Philosophical Manuscripts* (1844), and *The German Ideology* (1846) (selections)

Week 4, Sept. 25

Topic: Commodification, Fetishization, and Reification

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Reading: (1) Karl Marx, *Grundrisse* (1857-1858) and (2) Karl Marx, *Capital* (1867)

II. Hermeneutics, History, and the Human Sciences

Week 5, Oct. 2

Topic: The Critique of Historical Reason and the Hermeneutics of Historical Life

Reading: Wilhelm Dilthey, part three, Draft for a Critique of Historical Reason, from *The Formation of the Historical World in the Human Sciences* (1910-1911)

Week 6, Oct. 9

Topic: Hermeneutical Phenomenology and Historicity

Reading: (1) Martin Heidegger, "Wilhelm Dilthey's Research and the Struggle for a Historical Worldview" (1925); (2) Martin Heidegger, chapter five, Temporality and Historicity, from *Being and Time* (1927)

October 17: Short Paper One Due (6-8 pages)

Topic in late eighteenth or nineteenth-century philosophy

Week 7, Oct. 16

Topic: Ontological Hermeneutics, Effective History, and Truth

Reading: Hans-Georg Gadamer, part two, the extension of the question of truth to understanding in the human sciences, from *Truth and Method* (1960)

III. Critical Social Theory

Week 8, Oct. 23

Topic: Enlightenment, Instrumental Rationality, and the Culture Industry

Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, "The Concept of Enlightenment" and "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception," from *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944)

Week 9: Oct. 30

Topic: Nationalism, Totalitarianism, and the Pathologies of Modernity

Reading: Hannah Arendt, chapters six, nine, eleven, and thirteen, from *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951)

Week 10: Nov. 6

Topic: Negativity and Critique

Reading: Theodor W. Adorno, parts 2 (Concepts and Categories) and 3.3 (Meditations on Metaphysics), from *Negative Dialectics* (1966)

Week 11: Nov. 13

Topic: Rationalization and Reification and System and Lifeworld

Reading: Jürgen Habermas, Vol 1, IV. "From Lukács to Adorno: Rationalization as Reification" and vol. 2, VI. "System and Lifeworld," from *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1981)

Week 12: Nov. 20

Topic: Reconceiving Reification

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Reading: Axel Honneth, *Reification: A New Look at an Old Idea* (2005)

Week 13: Nov. 27 [possibly to be rescheduled]

Topic: Reconceiving Alienation

Reading: Rahel Jaeggi, *Alienation* (2005) (selections)

December 16: Paper Two Due (6-8 pages)

Topic in twentieth-century or contemporary philosophy

Planned Assessment Tasks:

In-class discussion and group discussion assignments: 20%

Research Paper One (6-8 pages): 40%

Research Paper Two (6-8 pages): 40%

Readings: see canvas